The Rise and Fall of Reading Abbey

J. B. Hurry

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The Rise and Fall

of

Reading Abbey.

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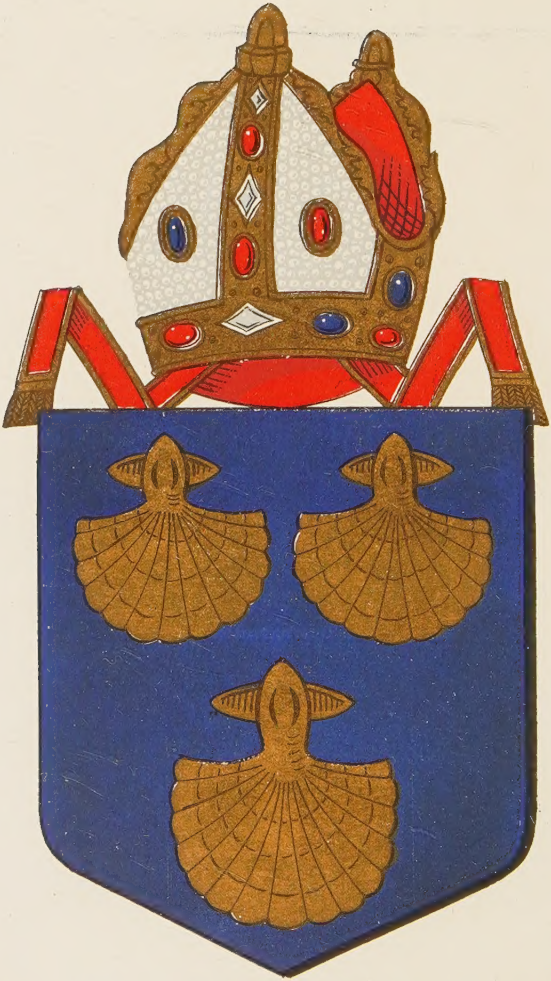

FIG. I. The Arms of the Abbey.

942-2937

The Rise and Fall of Reading Abbey.

BY

JAMIESON B. HURRY, M.A., M.D.

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

With Illustrations

London

ELLIOT STOCK, 62 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

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This Volume

is dedicated to

The Worshipful the Mayor, the Aldermen and Burgesses

of the

Borough of Reading.

Preface.

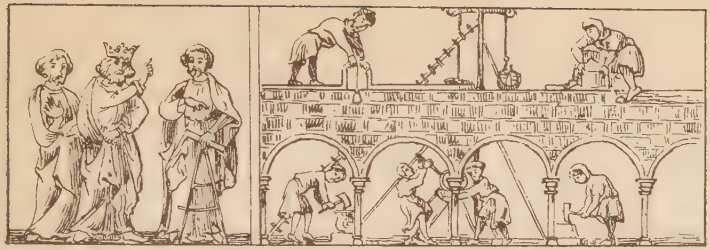
The Rise and Fall of Reading Abbey formed the subject of the Presidential Address to the Reading Literary and Scientific Society in 1905.

This Reprint, somewhat amplified, will, it is hoped, serve as a Guide to the "Noble and Royal Monastery of Reading," which has played an important part in the political and religious history of England, as well as in the local history of the ancient Borough whose name it bears.

Fuller details, as well as bibliographical references, will be found in the larger Work by the same Author, entitled "**Reading Abbey.**"

J. B. H.

Abbotsbrook, Reading.
Easter, 1906.



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The Rise of the Abbey.

I.—Cluny.

EIGHT black-robed monks halted at "Radingia" in the year of our Lord 1121. They had come from Cluny at the bidding of Henry Beauclerc to raise a great monastery to the glory of God.

Cluny, the home of these brethren, was a splendid and wealthy Benedictine Abbey, nestling in the valley of the Grosne, near to Mâcon, and renowned all the world over for the piety and prestige of its Abbots, for the boundless hospitality and missionary enthu-

siasm of its brethren. Equally noted was Cluny for its culture, for its literary attainments, and for its skill in agricultural and architectural science. All the Kings of Europe helped to build its magnificent Basilica, the largest Church in existence, a masterpiece of architecture, and lavishly embellished with statues, tapestries, pictures and shrines, many of them gifts from Popes and other visitors. In brief, when at its height, Cluny was one of the chief centres of the Christian world. To quote Pope Urbanus II.: "Congregatio Cluniacensis, divino charismate cœteris imbuta plenius, ut alter sol enitet in terris," *the Congregation of Cluny, more richly endowed with divine favour than the rest, shines on the earth like a second sun.*

II.—Radingia.

Fresh from such a home of Christian activity, these eight brethren halted at "Radingia," a little hamlet of some thirty one-storied chimneyless hovels, composed of

wattles banked up with mud, covered with a thatch of straw and surrounded by arable fields, pastures and woodland. The humble villeins and bordars, clad in coarse woollen homespun, and wearing the same clothes by night as by day, lived on barley meal or on a mixture of rye, oats and beans, varied with pig's flesh, and washed down with copious draughts of ale or mead. At night they slept on a pallet of straw. A little Saxon Church provided Christian worship.

The tenants in villenage spent their time in cultivating the land of the King's demesne, and also their own holdings, which in the form of scattered strips lay in the open fields round the village. Fishing and milling were also practised, while the swine-herd found mast for his numerous pigs in the adjacent woodland.

III.—The Founding of the Abbey.

How astonished the villagers of Radingia must have been at the arrival of these monks

of strange garb and speech! First a temporary lodging was built, with a little oratory, where God's blessing was daily asked on the great task that had been undertaken.

The site for the new Abbey was doubtless chosen by the King himself — a pleasant, rising ground, commanding beautiful views of the Oxfordshire and Berkshire hill slopes, and of the Thames and Kennet valleys. The precincts were first staked out and the site cleared. By the 18th of June 1121 all was ready, and Henry Beauclerc, in the presence of his successor, Stephen, and of many of his barons, laid the first stone of the monastery, which he purposed should be of unequalled magnificence—fit memorial of the King who eventually was buried before the High Altar of its stately Church. Soon followed an army of skilled craftsmen of many trades—masons, carpenters, plumbers, glaziers. The flints so freely used in the fabric were supplied by the adjacent pit at Caversham; the freestone was shipped across the Channel

and up the river from the historic quarries at Caen. Other stone was probably brought from Silchester, while timber grew in abundance on the banks of the Thames and Kennet.

Peter, the Prior of Cluny, with his seven brethren, doubtless took charge of operations, some monks from St. Pancras also rendering assistance. After two years of patient labour, building operations were sufficiently advanced for the organisation of the monastery, and this was entrusted to Hugh de Boves, a man "fide et bonis operibus plenus," *full of faith and good works.* Hugh de Boves, a descendant of the Counts of Amiens and sometimes called Hugues III. d'Amiens, was one of the most learned theologians of the day, and had recently been Prior of St. Pancras at Lewes, the headquarters of the Cluniacs in England. On April 15, 1123, he was appointed first Abbot of Reading, Prior Peter, who had originally come over in charge of the brethren from Cluny, resigning his charge and returning home.

Attracted by the fame of the learned and saintly Abbot, and eager to share the monastic daily life of prayer and labour, novices soon applied for admission to the new Abbey, which prospered so greatly that in less than two years after Hugh's appointment it was ready for dedication and for its Foundation Charter. Henry Beauclerc was abroad at the time, and the Charter was probably signed at Rouen on March 29th, 1125.

The "Rule" of St. Benedict had by the eleventh and twelfth centuries been widely adopted all over Europe. Throughout England especially did it meet with favour. "In every rich valley, by the side of every clear and deep stream arose a Benedictine Abbey, a centre of Christian worship and benevolence." To this famous Order belonged the religious house whose fortunes are being traced.

Amongst the Benedictine foundations the Abbey of Cluny at that time enjoyed the highest reputation for the zeal with which

the "Rule" was observed. To this must be attributed the partiality shown towards it by our Norman Kings. The Conqueror begged the Abbot of Cluny to send some of the brethren over to England, offering to pay their weight in gold. Rufus showered benefactions on the Cluniac house at Bermondsey; Henry I. contributed liberally to the great Basilica at Cluny, and granted his protection to the Priory of St. Pancras at Lewes—the earliest of the Cluniac settlements in this country. No wonder that where his own favourite Abbey was concerned, none but brethren from Cluny should be selected.

IV.—The Fabric.

The order in which the conventual buildings were erected is not known. The usual plan was to begin with the Chancel of the Church, and to add the Cloisters as rapidly as might be.

When erected, the Abbey consisted of a group of buildings clustering about a magni-

ficent Church, and enclosed by a massive wall on three sides, and by two streams (the Kennet and the Holy or Hallowed Brook) on the fourth (cf. Plan, Fig. xviii.). Four great gateways allowed of access, the principal or Compter Gate, in which was the Compter Prison, facing the great west door of the Church. Here dwelt the watchful porter, ever ready by a *Deo Gratias* to express his joy at another opportunity of welcoming the stranger.

The monastic precincts included an area of 30 acres, divided by a wall into the northern and southern courts, which communicated by the Inner Gateway (Fig. ii.), which is still standing. In the northern court or Forbury a fair was held three times a year; it was also largely used by merchants and pilgrims, who were debarred from the more strictly monastic or southern court.

The Abbey Church.

The principal building of the Abbey was its Church (cf. Plan, Fig. xviii.), a splendid

Fig. ii.—The Inner Gateway.

cruciform erection, of which, alas! nothing remains save some excoriated ivy-clad ruins. Only 50 feet less in length than St. Paul's Cathedral, and covering an area within the walls of about 35,400 feet, the Church consisted of a central nave and two lateral aisles, with two transepts, each divided into two apsidal chapels. The style was late Norman, and may probably be best illustrated by the Church of St. Bartholomew the Great, in Smithfield, or by Tewkesbury Church, which were built about the same time.

This great Church, like that of other wealthy Abbeys, was adorned with costly shrines, statues and reliquaries glittering with gems. On the Altar were chalices and patens made of pure gold, and other implements of ritual, carved or enamelled (such as can still be seen in the Mediæval Room of the British Museum), added to the splendour of the ceremonial. Some of the tiles now preserved in the Reading Museum may have decorated the floor of the Church.

Fig. iii.—The South Transept.

Adjoining the south transept (Fig. iii.) was the sacristy, in which under the care of the cope-keeper were kept the richly-embroidered copes, one of which, made of green baldachin, was presented by King Henry III. There were also the tunicles, dalmatics, chasubles and stoles worn on great festivals; altar-frontals, thuribles, cushions, orbs, pastoral staves, gold and silver collars, one of which came from the King's cope, and one from the cope of the Abbot of Ramsey. Some of the most beautiful eucharistic vestments were presented from their own wardrobes by various benefactors.

Here, too, may have been preserved the shrines which were borne round the Church on great festivals. One special shrine, weighing 20 lb. 9 oz., and adorned with sapphires, pearls, rubies and other precious stones, probably enclosed the most prized of all relics, the reputed hand of St. James, given by the royal founder.

The Cloisters.

The Cloisters (Fig. 18.) were placed south of the nave in the shape of a quadrangle, measuring about 145 feet each way, and sheltered by the Church from the north wind. The four walks or corridors of the Cloisters formed the principal dwelling-place of the community. Here the monks sat reading, transcribing, illuminating, teaching; here was transacted the business of the monastery; here were taught the novices; here were practised the chants and melodies of the Divine Office under the guidance of the cantor. Here, too, probably stood the aumbries containing the precious MSS. At the north end of the East Cloister was the Abbot's seat, and near to it the Prior's, on the other side of the door into the Church; further south was the place of the novice-master and novices. In the West Cloister were located the junior monks. In the south walk of the Cloister was the entrance to the Refectory or Dining-hall, and

the Lavatory, with cupboards for towels, used by the monks before their meals. Not far off was the well. At night the Cloisters were lit by four cressets or bowls of tallow provided with wicks.

The Refectory.

The Refectory or Frater was a hall in the form of a parallelogram, extending along the south side of the Cloisters, with two parallel tables, and a high table called the "mensa major" for the Abbot at the east end. Behind the Abbot's seat probably hung the "Majestas" or a crucifix. On the south side was a pulpit where a monk read to the brethren during meals. Beneath the Refectory may have been cellarage.

This splendid hall, measuring 167 feet by 38, has been the scene of numerous historic assemblies. On one occasion the Rolls of Parliament describe it as "a certain apartment within the Abbey, prepared for the purpose, the King (*i.e.* Edward IV.) being

Fig. 18.—The East Cloister.

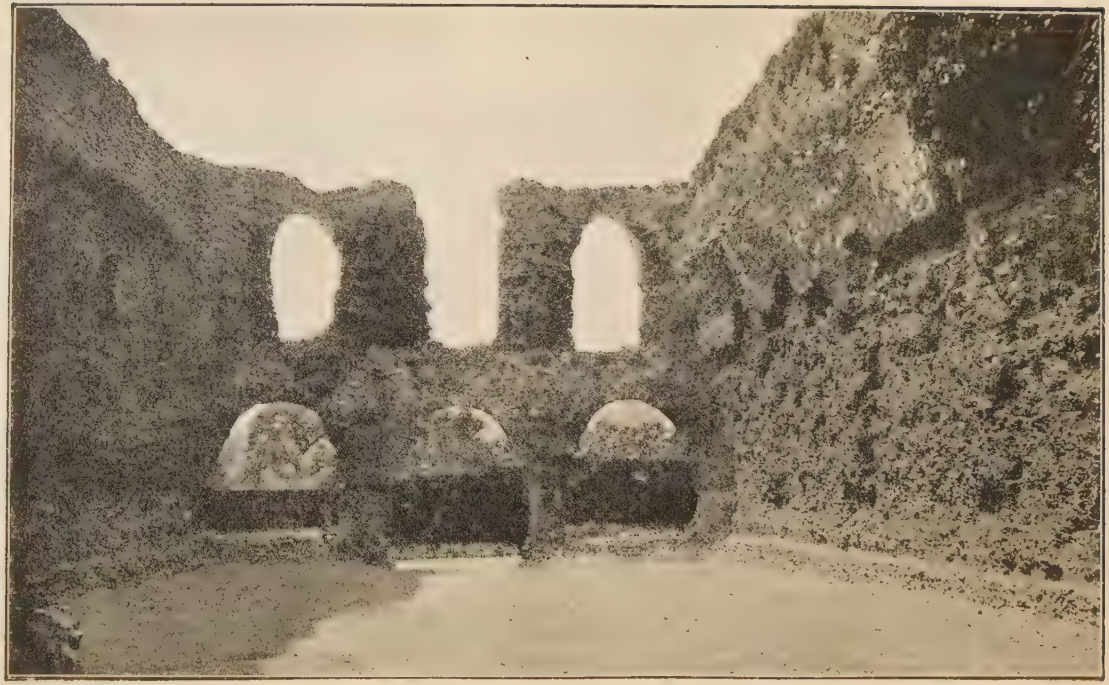


Fig. 8.—The Chapter House.

seated on a royal throne, and the three estates in full Parliament assembled," and this was only one of various similar gatherings. At the west end of the Refectory were situated the Kitchen and Buttery, where the pantler kept the bread and napery.

The Chapter House.

On the east side of the Cloisters was the Chapter House (Fig. 8.), one of the largest in England, measuring 79 feet in length by 42 in breadth and about 40 feet in height. Running round it may still be seen the remains of the benches on which sat the monks, while at the east end were seats for the Abbot, Prior and Sub-prior. Above the Abbot's seat again was placed a "Majestas." Many an earnest discourse has been delivered within these walls by the zealous Abbots, urging the brethren to live up to their Christian profession and to resist worldly temptations.

The Dorter.

The monks slept in one long Dormitory or Dorter (Fig. 81.), which was placed south of the Chapter House. The "Rule" enjoined them to sleep clothed, and girded with belts or cords, so that they might arise at once when the bell was rung for the night office. Beneath the Dormitory was the Calefactorium or Day-room, where in cold weather a fire was kept burning. Here the monks traded with merchants, conversed with friends or gave directions to servants.

The Necessarium.

The Necessarium or Rere-dorter adjoined the Dormitory, a branch of the Holy Brook running underneath and acting as the main drain of the Monastery. In the words of Leland "The halowid Brooke . . . passith thorough a Peace of thabbay, clensing the Filth of it."

Fig. 81.—The Dormitory.

The Cellarium.

The Cellarium or Cellarer's lodging was usually placed on the west side of the Cloisters, and is therefore supposed to have occupied that position at Reading, although direct evidence is wanting. The Cellarer, "a God-fearing man, who may be like a father to the whole community," had charge of the commissariat, and ranked as one of the principal obedientiaries or officers of the monastery.

The Hospitium of St. John.

The Hospitium, or Guest-house, was an essential part of every monastery, and was so placed that the hospitality and almsgiving to pilgrims, beggars and travellers might not interfere with the religious services or routine of the monastery. The exercise of hospitality and charity was enjoined by St. Benedict: "Let all guests that come be received like Christ Himself, for He will say, 'I was a

stranger and ye took me in.'" The Foundation Charter of Reading Abbey emphasises the same precept: "Whoever shall . . . be made Abbot, let him not misuse and bestow the alms of the monastery on his lay kindred, or on other persons, but use them for the entertainment of the poor, of pilgrims or of guests."

How pleasant to the traveller, after a long tramp over rough roads, to catch sight of the splendid Abbey, ever ready to refresh him in its guest-hall and to rest him in its dormitory. How he must have thanked God for the hospitable monks, when in due course they wished him *God-speed* on his way!

The geographical situation of Reading, on one of the great arteries of traffic in the Middle Ages, doubtless increased the importance of the Abbey, and of its famous Hospitium. "Here may be seen," to quote the contemporary historian William of Malmesbury, "what is peculiar to the place—guests arriving every hour and consuming even more than the inmates themselves."

And did ever monks receive higher eulogy than to be called, as they are by the same chronicler, "praeclarum sanctitatis exemplum, hospitalitatis indefessae dulcis indicium," *a noble pattern of holiness, and an example of unwearied and delightful hospitality.* No wonder that before many years had passed the Hospitium became too small.

Matters came to a climax in the time of Abbot Hugh II., a man of noble ambitions and of tender sympathy with the poor. So great was the crowd of guests and pilgrims asking for admission that, in spite of the Foundation Charter, only the rich were sure of a welcome. The poor and solitary wayfarer, if not actually repelled, too often met with a treatment that was repugnant both to Christian charity and to the wishes of the royal founder. Accordingly, Abbot Hugh between 1189 and 1193 built a much larger Hospitium, called the Hospitium of St. John, so that there might be adequate entertainment for all who applied.

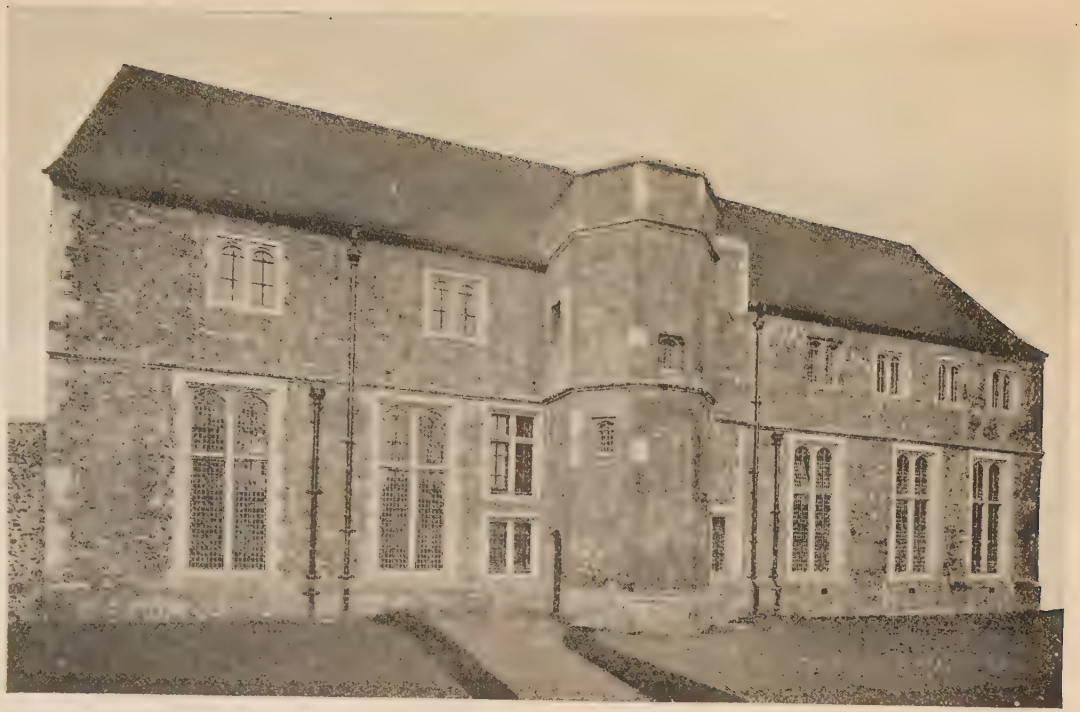


Fig. Bii.—The Hospitium of St. John.

This noble Hospitium consisted of three principal divisions, viz. an almshouse, a refectory and a dormitory. The almshouse adjoined St. Laurence's Church, and in it resided twenty-six poor persons, thirteen of either sex. The sisters were selected from the widows of persons who had borne office in the town, and had fallen into poverty. Thirteen other persons, all men, were supplied with necessaries out of the alms daily distributed by the almoner.

To the north of the almshouse was the refectory or guest-hall of the Hospitium, measuring 120 feet by 20 to 30 feet, with a row of pillars supporting pointed arches down the centre.

The third division was the dormitory (Fig. Bii.), a noble hall 200 feet in length, the only department of the Hospitium of which any portion has survived.[1]

The usual period during which a visitor was allowed free hospitality was two days and nights, the guest being expected to

depart the third day after dinner. If he wished to prolong his stay, special permission must be obtained. The visitor was expected to rise for matins, and observe the exercises of the community.

The Hospitium of St. John was again rebuilt about 1438 during the abbacy of Thomas Henley. Soon afterwards (c. 1445) the almshouse for poor sisters was discontinued, and by 1480 the Hospitium had apparently been suppressed.

During a visit paid to Reading in that year by King Edward IV. a Memorial was presented by the burgesses, stating that the charitable work of the Hospitium for the poor and sick had ceased, that "th' abbott takethe profyytt therof, and dothe no suche almes nor good deds ther wyth." Moreover the proposed Grammar School which Abbot Thorne I. had promised to the town as a substitute for the Hospitium showed no sign of being realised.

The King referred the matter to Richard

Beauchamp, Bishop of Salisbury, who promised to set it right; but owing to the Bishop's death nothing was done until 1485, when the refectory and the residence of the brethren were converted by Abbot Thorne into the Grammar School.

During the following year King Henry VII. paid a visit to Reading, and in connection with this visit the School received the name of "Royal Grammar School of King Henry VII."

The Leper-house.

Another charitable institution was the Leper-house, dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene, in which were housed the lepers and sufferers from cancer, lupus and other affections of the skin. The lepers wore a special dress, and carried a clapper to give warning of their approach. They were not allowed to enter the Church, the Mill or the Bakehouse, nor to touch or even eat with healthy persons. From olden times leprosy had been regarded

with great antipathy. This feeling, however, was by no means universal. The noble St. Hugh of Lincoln may be quoted as a brilliant exception. He actually kissed the poor lepers, calling them his "flowers of Paradise," and exclaimed, "the kisses of the lepers heal my sick soul."

The Infirmary.

To the east of the Church is supposed to have stood the Infirmary, where were tended sick monks, and those who had grown infirm through advancing years. Here was practised the "minutio" or phlebotomy, more particularly about the season of Lent, but also according to the phases of the moon. Here at length, fortified by the rites of the Church and surrounded by their brethren, those monks whose course on earth had closed passed away from the peaceful home in the monastery to the rest of Paradise, their bodies being committed to the ground in the adjacent Church-yard.

The Mill and Bakehouse.

The Mill and Bakehouse formed another important department of monastic economy, and were placed close to the Holy Brook, which is still bridged by one of the original arches ornamented with dog-tooth moulding.

The Stables.

The extensive Stables were placed near the Mill, and were occupied by numerous horses in charge of the marshal of the horse, a huntsman, a palfrey keeper and various underlings.

Growth of the Abbey.

The Abbey was by no means complete when granted its Charter in 1125. The Leper-house already referred to was not built until 1134, during the abbacy of Aucherius. Even the Abbey Church was not ready for its "Hallowing" until 1164, when the ceremony was performed by Archbishop Thomas Becket in the presence of Henry II.

The next important development was the erection between 1189 and 1193 of an enlarged Hospitium to replace the original one. The Inner Gateway was probably erected about 1250.

To the twentieth Abbot, Nicholas de Quappelade, fell the honour of completing the Abbey Church by the addition of the Eastern or Lady Chapel. The 150th anniversary of the "Hallowing of the Church," April 19th, 1314, was chosen for laying the foundations, the Chapel being dedicated to the Virgin Mary. In 1438, during the abbacy of Thomas Henley, extensive alterations were made to St. Laurence's Church, while the adjoining Hospitium of St. John was for a second time rebuilt. Doubtless numerous minor changes were made in the Church and conventual buildings, but, owing to the extensive demolition, all architectural details that would have thrown light on the changes have disappeared.

Such in briefest outline was the famous monastery, which stood guard over the little burgh of Radingia at its gates. The dedication, as appears by the Foundation Charter, was to the Virgin Mary and St. John the Evangelist, the blazon of its shield of arms being azure three escallops or (Fig. i.).

V.—The Abbot.

At the head of this great religious house was placed the Abbot, *Dominus Abbas*, a Peer of Parliament, who was frequently concerned in State affairs, and figured in State pageants.

The Abbot of Reading was probably summoned to the great Councils of the Realm even in the reign of Henry I., sitting with the Bishops, Abbots and Barons as tenants in chief. After 1295 his name constantly appears in the Writs by which the spiritual Peers (Fig. viii.) were convoked by the King "nobiscum super dictis negociis tractaturi et vestrum consilium impensuri," *to treat and advise with us.* The Abbot did

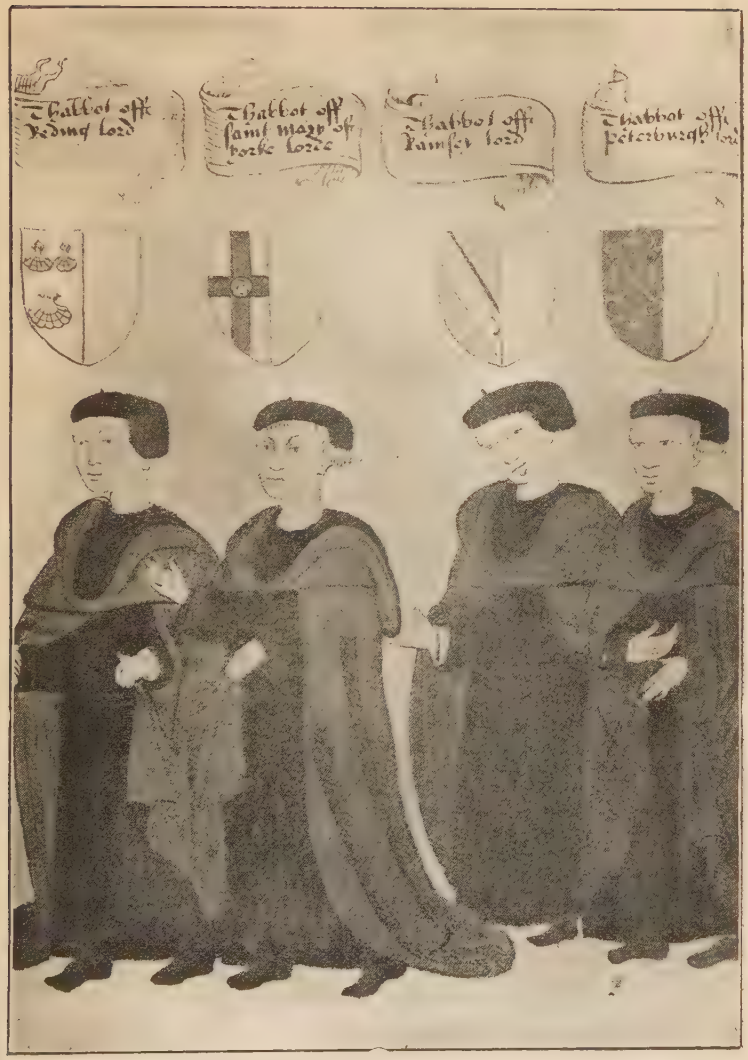


Fig. Biii.—Procession of Abbots to Parliament.

not always attend personally in order to vote. Peers could then vote by proxy, and in 1307 the Abbot of Reading sent as procurators his comonachos Johannes de Sutton and Jordanus de Sutton. Again in 1322 a severe illness compelled the Abbot to appoint a procurator.

A coveted distinction was conferred by the Pope in 1288 by his licence to the Abbot to wear the mitre and other vestments pertaining to the episcopal office; only a few of the more important Abbeys in England enjoyed a similar privilege.

The Abbot was Lord of manors, manor-houses, farms and fisheries, and enjoyed extensive jurisdiction over Reading and the neighbouring district. He was patron of numerous benefices, including Beenham, Bucklebury, Cholsey, Englefield, Pangbourne, the three old parish Churches of Reading, Sulhampstead, Thatcham, Tilehurst, Warfield, Wargrave (in Berkshire), Stanton Harcourt (in Oxfordshire) and

Rowington (in Warwickshire). He owned the manors of Cholsey, Blewbury, Hendred, Burghelbury, Greenham, Midgham, Cookham, Calthorp, Pangbourne, Basyldon, Shyningfield and Sonning. He farmed large tracts

Fig. ix.—The Abbey Seal (12th Century).

of land, and conducted important business transactions, which involved the use of a conventual as well as of a private seal.

The Abbey had two different seals during

its history, one dating from the twelfth, the other from the fourteenth century.

(*a*) *First Seal.*

The earliest one (**Fig. ix.**) is green, and measures about 3 × 2 inches. The following is its description :—

> Pointed oval: the Virgin, with crown and embroidered drapery, seated on a carved throne: on her lap the Child lifting up the right hand in benediction, in the left hand an orb. In the Virgin's right hand a sceptre or lily branch, topped with a dove, in the left hand a model of a church.
>
> Legend wanting.

(*b*) *Second Seal.*

The second Abbey seal (**Fig. x.**), dating from 1328, is round, with a diameter of $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches. A specimen is preserved in the Reading Museum.

Obverse. *Reverse.*

Fig. 1.—The Abbey Seal (1328).

Obverse: The Virgin, with crown, seated on a throne, the Child on her left knee, and in her right hand an orb; between St. James the Greater, with pilgrim's cap, staff, book and wallet on the left; St. John the Evangelist standing on an eagle, in the right hand a scroll inscribed:—IN PRINCIPIO (John i. 1), in the left hand a palm-branch, on the right. Each in a separate niche, carved and ornamented with a canopy of open tracery with ogee arch, crocketed and pinnacled. The corbel carved with foliage. At each side a wavy branch.

S' COE · ECCE · COVETVAL' · RADYNG' · FVDATE · I · HONORE · SCE · MARIE · ET · APOSTL'OR · IOH'IS · ET · IACOBI.

Inside the edge the date-verse:—

ANNO : MILLENO · TRICETENO : FABRICAT'.

Reverse: King Henry I., with crown, seated, in the right hand a sceptre fleury,

in the left hand a model of a church; between, on the left St. Peter with book and keys, on the right St. Paul with book and sword. Each in a niche as in the *obverse*. The corbel and branches as in the *obverse* also.

ENS · REX · HENRICVS^VMME : DEITAT' : AMICVS ^ECVR' : DEGIT ENTV̄ : DOM' : ISTE : ꝶEGIT.

Inside the edge the following verse, which completes the distich indicative of the date of the seal :—

SIGNV̄ : BIS : DENO : B' : Q^RTO : CONSOCIAT' :

(*c*) *The Seal of Hugh, Archbishop of Rouen, formerly Abbot Hugh I.*

The seal used by Abbot Hugh I. at Reading Abbey (1123–1130) is no longer extant. But in the *Archives Nationales* at Paris is the seal[2] (Fig. xi.) he used when Archbishop of Rouen (1130–1164). It measures about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter.

Round: Archbishop seated, mitred and crosiered; right hand raised in benediction. At the side are the letters DEI and GRA.

✠ HVGO A·CHIEPS ROTOMAG.

Fig. xi.—The Seal of Hugh, Archbishop of Rouen, formerly Abbot Hugh I.

(*d*) *The Seal of Abbot Hugh II.*

Another seal of interest is now at Canterbury Cathedral (Fig. xii.), and belonged to the noted Abbot Hugh II. (1180–1199). It measures $3 \times 1\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

Pointed oval: the Abbot standing on a dwarf-column, in the right hand a pastoral staff, in the left hand a book.

✠ SIGILLVM HVGONIS · RADINGENSIS · ABBATIS.

Fig. xii.—The Seal of Abbot Hugh II.

A privilege granted to the Abbot by the Foundation Charter was that of creating knights "in sacra veste Christi" *by investiture of the Church*, provided the knights were of mature age and discreet judgment.

Since Reading did not owe the Crown any knights' service for its lands, nor was liable to a money composition in lieu of such service, its lands were probably granted to tenants to hold on rents or services "servitium debitum" to be paid to the Abbey. Later on, however, during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, the Abbot of Reading was frequently summoned to send his military service to the Crown. This burden may have been imposed by the same right as that which in the twelfth century exacted a sum of money from other houses in lieu of military service.[3]

Several country houses, charmingly situated on the outskirts of Reading, must be included amongst the endowments of the abbacy. Some of them were used for hunting; to others the Abbot could retire for a while from the anxieties pertaining to his high office. The favourite house was probably at Bere Court, near Pangbourne, where some richly illuminated MSS., doubtless belonging to the monastic library, were recently discovered.

The Abbey by its Foundation Charter was endowed "cum moneta et uno monetario apud Radingiam," *with a mint and one moneyer at Reading.* Another Charter dating from c. 1127, issued by Roger, Bishop of Salisbury, Chief Justiciary of all England, and by the King's authority, allocated to the Abbot one of the royal moneyers in London, named Edgar, who was authorised to coin and hold an exchange there on behalf of the Abbot (possibly owing to the Abbey still being incomplete), and this privilege was to descend to Edgar's successors.

The right to coin money was confirmed by Stephen, by Henry II. and by Richard I., the mint and moneyer being either in Reading or in London. In John's Charter, however, the mint was fixed in Reading. The privilege was withdrawn by Edward II. but renewed by Edward III., who, by a Writ issued in 1338, "granted to the Abbot and monks of Redyng that they and their successors should for ever have one moneyer and one die for

the making as well halfpennies and farthings as sterlings" (*i.e.* pennies). Another Writ shows that the necessary dies were made in London by John de Flete, warden of the King's mint, for the Abbot, although the actual coining took place in Reading. Soon after this local mints were gradually discontinued, and Reading, with other towns, lost the privilege of a mint.

Silver pennies[4] *tempore* Henry I., and struck by a moneyer Edgar, c. 1131-1135 (Hawkins, type No. 255), are extant (**Fig. xiii.**), bearing the inscriptions:

Obverse ✠ HENRICVS:
face ¾ to left, holding sceptre.

Reverse ✠ ÆDGAR : ON : LVNDE :
tressure of 4 sides fleury at the corners, upon a cross fleury, a pellet in each angle.

Since the same moneyer would probably not strike both for London and for Reading without using a "difference," and as such has

not been observed, Mr. W. J. Andrew believes that Edgar "never coined, in that type at least, for the King, and therefore that all his

Obverse. *Reverse.*

Fig. xiii.—Silver Penny. *tempore* HENRY I.

Obverse. *Reverse.*

Obverse. *Reverse.*

Fig. xiv.—Silver Penny and Halfpenny.
tempore EDWARD III.

coins were struck under the authority of the Abbot."

The only extant coins that were undoubtedly struck at the Abbey are the silver

pennies and the two varieties of silver halfpennies of the reign of Edward III. (Fig. xiii.). Both these varieties have analogous types in London coins; one of them corresponds with the penny, and has been described by Mr. L. A. Lawrence as the bull-head. The issue probably began in 1338 and terminated about 1345, since the type of head of the Reading penny resembles that of the florin (1343) and first noble (1344), but differs from the type of head on the second noble (1346) of the same reign.

This silver penny and the two varieties of halfpennies are represented in the National Collection, while specimens may also be seen in the Reading Museum. These coins are distinguished from the ordinary coins of Edward III. not only by the legend VILLA RADINGY, but also by a scallop shell in the first quarter of the *reverse*.

Obverse: EDW. R. ANGL. DNS. HIB.

Bust facing, crowned.

Reverse: VILLA RADINGY.

Long cross pattée, dividing legend; in one angle of the cross is a scallop, in the others are three pellets.

The responsibilities of the Abbot extended far beyond the limits of adjacent counties. Right away at Leominster in Herefordshire, at Rindelgros[5] on the Firth of Tay, and at May in the Firth of Forth the mother house at Reading had fair daughter houses to which visits of inspection and control were paid. Sometimes a recalcitrant brother was temporarily transferred to one of these "cells" as a disciplinary measure.

What a *grand seigneur* the *dominus abbas* must have appeared in the eyes of the burghers! Sometimes they had seen him entertaining in princely style the King himself, whom he had succeeded as lord of the manor. At other times, on great festivals, they had watched him, robed and mitred,

ministering at the High Altar, and expounding the mysteries of their Holy religion.

For many a long year the burghers rendered unquestioning fealty to the monastery, which towered majestically over the little village. Their streams, their fisheries, their mills, their land, their trade and their markets were under strict control. The villeins could only plough and sow and reap their own strips of land in consideration of rendering services either in money, labour or in kind to the Abbot, or to his representative the bailiff. Mills paid a fixed money rent, and probably a tribute of fish from the mill-stream. In a word, the Abbey claimed civil as well as spiritual supremacy.

The feudal rights exercised over the poor serfs of the day is illustrated in an interesting deed (A.D. 1158–1164) recording the redemption of a "nativus" or serf, born on the monastic estate, by a William Pipardus, the sum paid being 2 marks (c. 26s. 8d.).

The story of the gradual revolt of the

burghers, as represented by their Guild Merchant, against the Abbot's dominion is of singular interest. Clinging to chartered rights and ecclesiastical prerogatives, one Abbot after another showed a lamentable lack of sympathy with the legitimate aspirations of the people. Hence arose a long and bitter struggle for liberty and justice, a struggle lasting for over 200 years. Some of the privileges conferred by the royal founder and his successors were gradually surrendered. But not until the last Abbot had been gibbeted before his own Abbey Gateway were the burghers released from the grip of their feudal lord. Then at length dawned the day of liberty, and in the first Charter of Incorporation, dated 1542, the Mayor and burgesses were constituted the governing body of the town, with full executive authority and jurisdiction.

Within the conventual walls the Abbot had complete control, and exacted implicit obedience. He appointed the obedientiaries or

inferior officers, such as the prior, the cellarer, the hospitaller, the infirmarian; he presided at the daily assembly in the Chapter House, and allotted to each monk his share of work. A large house, known as the Abbot's Lodging, was assigned to his use, and there he lived in princely style, exercising hospitality to the highest dignitaries in Church and State.

Some idea of the splendour of the Abbot's retinue may be gained from the number of domestics retained in his service, even at a period, *i.e.* during the abbacy of Nicholas de Quappelade, when the monastic finances were straitened. Nearly forty servants are enumerated, including—

1. The marshal or master of the horse.
2. The panterer, who had charge of the napery.
3. The cup-bearer.
4. A janitor, who dined in the Abbot's hall.
5. His page.
6, 7. The master-cook and his boy.
8. The chamberlain of the Abbot, who carved at his table.
9. His boy.

10. A doorkeeper of the Abbot's hall.
11. An under-keeper of the pantry.
12. An under cup-bearer.
13. A hosteller, whose duty it was to receive strangers.
14. A keeper of the wine-cellar, to attend upon the Abbot after dinner in his own apartment.
15. The Abbot's under-cook.
16. The Abbot's third cook, who had the care of the larder.
17, 18, 19. The Abbot's carter, his boy and the under-carter.
20. The Abbot's huntsman.
21. The Prior's cook.
22. The head cook of the Abbey.
23. The chief baker.
24. The under doorkeeper.
25. A servant in waiting on the under-chamberlain.
26, 27. The Abbot's palfrey-keeper and his page.
28, 29, 30. The under-chamberlain's boy and two other boys to attend the Abbot's company or visitors.
31. The Abbot's running footman.
32. The boy who waited in the Refectory.
33, 34, 35, 36, 37. The cook of the infirmary and four attendants.

The monastic revenues, derived from the gifts of pious donors, from such spiritualities as advowsons and tithes, and from such temporalities as tolls, profits on mills and

fisheries, rents of manors, fines, pannage &c. amounted to a large sum. In the reign of Henry VIII. Reading Abbey ranked as one of the wealthiest of all religious houses, the gross rental exceeding £2000, equivalent in modern currency to £20,000 a year.

VI.—The Monks.

The monks in residence varied in number between fifty and two hundred (**Fig. 18.**). They were clothed in flannel underclothing, and over this wore a loose black tunic, an upper garment called the scapular and a cowl or capuchin ending in a point. Shoes and stockings completed their outfit. The monastic vow bound them to poverty, chastity and obedience; they gloried in the title of "pauperes Christi." Religion was taken very seriously in those days, refuge being sought in the Cloister as the place where a consistent Christian life, untainted by doubt or worldly dissipation, could best be followed.

Fig. xB.—Cluniac Monk.

No private possessions were permitted, property being held in common. The few necessaries were supplied from the common store, and included cowl, tunic, shoes, stockings, girdle, knife, pen, needle, handkerchief and tablets.

A large portion of the day was spent in the Cloisters, this open-air life conducing to health and vigour. The night was spent in the common Dormitory, where strict silence was observed, and a light always kept burning.

Seven times a day did the monks assemble in the Choir of the Church for religious worship.[6] Matins and lauds came first, either at or soon after midnight, when the brethren, waked by the sacrist, tramped down the stairs of the Dormitory and passed through the east Cloister into the Church, through the fine doorway which is still standing. This service lasted about an hour and a half, and at its conclusion the monks returned to bed.

At day-break, the time varying according

to the season, the monks were waked for prime, the second service, after which they passed into the Cloister to wash and put on their day garments. Next came the "mixtum" or breakfast, consisting of bread and wine or beer. Breakfast was followed by chapter mass, by tierce and by the assembly in the Chapter House, where the martyrology was read, penalties for the breaking of rules inflicted, and an address or exhortation given by the Abbot. Thus was the high ideal of a monastic life kept in constant remembrance. The principal service of the day, *i.e.* high mass, *magna missa*, with elaborate ritual, and commemorating the supreme Sacrifice of the Saviour, succeeded the Chapter. At its conclusion usually came sext, after which dinner was served in the Refectory. During this meal strict silence was observed, while the reader for the week read the Scriptures or some suitable book.

After a short service called nones, the

obedientiaries and brethren dispersed to their several occupations. The hospitaller would attend his guests in the Hospitium, the infirmarian the inmates of the Infirmary. The Bakehouse and Brewery doubtless received a visit from the cellarer, who also purchased at the market of the burgh such provisions as were not supplied by the garden or farm of the monastery. Meanwhile the precentor would be drilling his choir, the sacrist seeing to the vestments and plate in the Sacristy.

Some of the brethren had charge of the compotus rolls, which must be ready for audit day; others illuminated those exquisite MSS., some of which fortunately have been preserved to this day, or rubricated elaborate initials. Games and other amusements were often indulged in by the younger brethren, while manual labour in the garden, vineyard, fields or workshops of the establishment, was also largely practised, as enjoined by the "Rule" of St. Benedict.

Vespers formed the sixth service of the day, and took place at an hour in the afternoon which varied in different monasteries. At its conclusion the monks washed their hands and took their places in the Refectory for supper. This short meal consisted of one good and liberal dish ("generale") and one pittance, or light additional plate, with cheese, nuts or other fruit.

Supper over, the brethren passed up to the Dormitory to change their day clothes for others adapted for the night. Before long they were summoned by the tolling bell to compline, the last religious act, after which each monk was sprinkled with holy water and retired to the Dormitory. By half-past seven in winter, and perhaps an hour later in summer, the monastic day had ended.

VII.—History.

Reading Abbey, founded on June 18th, 1121, received its first Charter in 1125 (Fig. xvi.). Here King Henry explains the

object of his royal Foundation :—" The salvation of my soul and of King William my father, of King William my brother, and of William, my son, and of Queen Matilda my mother, and of Queen Matilda my wife, and of all my ancestors and successors," and Heaven's wrath is invoked on those who should lay a sacrilegious hand on this monastery of Reading. But the character of the King justifies the suggestion that his real aim was to atone for his vices by the building and endowment of churches and monasteries.

Many privileges, immunities and endowments were conferred on the new Foundation : freedom from gelt and toll and other customs by land and by water ; extensive jurisdiction in cases of assault, theft and murder ; the right to a mint and a moneyer, and other privileges for which reference must be made to the original deed.

King Henry's seal is appended to the Charter, and followed by the seals and names of twenty-eight witnesses, including those of

Queen Adeliza, the Archbishops of Canterbury, York and Rouen, and those of various Bishops and Peers.

The gift by the founder of the reputed hand of St. James conferred a special distinction on the Abbey, and led subsequently to other royal favours, as well as to pilgrimages, forty days' indulgence being granted to visitors to the relic.

Further privileges were conferred in a second Charter of Henry I., including exemption of all the property of the Abbey, whether lay or ecclesiastical, from dane-geld and all other taxes or aid. Succeeding monarchs confirmed and added to these immunities, which were such as only the greatest Abbeys possessed.

The close connection of the Abbey with Cluny is shown by the fact that the first two Abbots had previously been priors of St. Pancras at Lewes, the head-quarters of the Cluniacs in this country, and by the subsequent election of the eighth Abbot, Hugh II., to the abbacy of Cluny. Nevertheless, Read-

ing was never subject to the jurisdiction or visitation of the mother Abbey, as were the other cluniac foundations in this country.

At the death of Henry I., near Rouen, in 1135, his body was embalmed, brought to Reading, and buried before the High Altar, in the presence of King Stephen. A splendid effigy was placed on the royal tomb.

In the following year, on the anniversary of the death of Henry I., Queen Adeliza, his second wife, paid a visit to the grave, and placed a rich pall on the Altar of the Church.

In 1163 a "trial by battle" took place at Reading between Robert de Montfort and Henry de Essex, on the island just below Caversham bridge. The following incident led to the quarrel. In an engagement which Henry II. had with the Welsh in 1157, some of the nobles, who had been detached with a considerable part of the army, were cut off by an ambuscade. Those who escaped, believing the King to be surrounded, spread the rumour that he was either taken or slain.

The news of this imaginary disaster led to the flight of the greater part of the remaining army. Among others, Henry de Essex, hereditary standard-bearer to the Kings of England, threw away the royal banner and fled with the rest. For this act of cowardice he was challenged as a traitor by Robert de Montfort. Essex denied the charge, declaring that he was fully persuaded at the time that the King was slain or taken prisoner. Such indeed would probably have been the case, had not Roger, Earl of Clare, brought up a body of troops, and displayed again the royal Standard. This encouraged the soldiers, and saved the remainder of the army.

The King ordered the quarrel to be decided by judicial duel, and the two knights met at Reading on April 8th, the King being present, together with many of the nobles and other spectators. Montfort began the combat with great fury, Essex acting on the defensive. This lasted for a while, but at length Essex, "turning reason into rage, took upon himself

the part of a challenger and not of a defender," and fell after receiving many wounds. The King, supposing him to be slain, at the request of several nobles, who were relatives of Essex, gave permission to the monks to inter the body, commanding that no further violence should be offered to it. The monks took up the vanquished knight and carried him into the Abbey, where he recovered from his wounds. Eventually he joined the community and assumed the habit of a monk, his estates being confiscated.

On April 19th, 1164, the great Abbey Church was hallowed, after taking more than forty years to complete. To mark the occasion the King and many nobles of the realm travelled to Reading; there came too the great Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket, and ten suffragan bishops. What a spectacle that must have been! Think of the magnificent procession of monarch, nobles, Archbishop, Abbot and monks in gorgeous apparel, winding through aisle and nave past

the royal tomb up to the glorious choir. In due order would follow wonder-working relics, preserved in golden shrines adorned with sapphires and pearls, reputed relics of the tutelary saints, absolving from sin and preserving from misfortune. And as to-day you wander through the ruins that survive, you can still in imagination hear the sacred music of the anthem, and listen to the voice of thanksgiving as the great Archbishop dedicates the fabric to the worship of God for ever and ever.

In 1191 King Richard I. held the Great Council of the Realm at the Abbey.

In 1213 an important ecclesiastical Council was held by King John, probably in the Chapter House.

In 1227 Henry III. kept his Christmas at the Abbey, when there were great festivities in honour of the royal visit.

In 1275 the Abbey was heavily in debt, and Edward I. took the management of its affairs into his own hands, and appointed a

Commissioner, Roland de Harlegh, to administer it.

In 1359, during the reign of Edward III., the marriage of his fourth son, John of Gaunt, afterwards Duke of Lancaster, with his cousin Blanche, daughter of Henry Plantagenet, Duke of Lancaster, was celebrated at the Abbey. The bridal ceremony was the occasion of a splendid pageant and of great rejoicing. The tournament, in which the King with his four sons and nineteen knights took part, lasted for a whole fortnight.

In 1389 Richard II. held a grand Council at Reading, at which he dismissed his former advisers and took the reins of government into his own hands.

In 1403 Henry IV. came to the Abbey.

Henry V. appears not to have visited the Abbey. But Henry VI. was there in 1452, and several Parliaments met at Reading during his reign.

In 1464 a great Council of peers was held at Reading, when King Edward IV. publicly

announced his marriage with Elizabeth Woodville. The marriage had been celebrated secretly six months previously, but was now first made public, and the Queen was led in solemn pomp to the Abbey Church.

In 1486 Henry VII. paid a visit to Reading, in connection with which the Grammar School received the name of "Royal Grammar School of Henry VII."

In 1520 was elected to the abbacy Hugh Cook Faringdon, the last of a roll of thirty-one Abbots, and after election the new Abbot received a visit from the King, with whom he became on intimate terms. Indeed Henry VIII. is said to have called Faringdon "his own Abbot," and to have exchanged New Year's gifts with him.

VIII.—"Nobile et Regale Monasterium de Redynge."

Few religious houses have been founded under fairer auspices than was "the noble and royal monastery of Reading," as it is

called in the Annals of the sister house at Bermondsey. Erected on a princely scale "sumptibus Regis," *at the expense of the King* and of subsequent benefactors, endowed with worldly possessions and privileges such as few could rival, Reading Abbey was for over four centuries the home of Christian worship and active benevolence. In its early days the brethren were men who loved and lived the religion they professed, and who sought in humility of heart to carry out the precepts of St. Paul, τῇ προσευχῇ προσκαρτεροῦντες, τὴν φιλοξενίαν διώκοντες, *continuing instant in prayer, given to hospitality.* Doubtless to the spiritual atmosphere of Cluny this high standard must largely be attributed; the good tree had yielded good fruit.

As regards its local influence the Abbey conferred signal benefits on the little burgh at its gate. Roads and bridges were constructed and repaired, trade was encouraged, education promoted, arts and crafts were introduced. Fresh land was brought under

cultivation, improved methods of agriculture superseding the old. The life of the burgh was brought into touch with the life of the nation.

On the other hand the legitimate aspirations of the burghers for a larger measure of self-government were sadly thwarted, the Abbot turning a deaf ear to their requests for liberty, and refusing to remit the vexatious tolls which were levied at every corner of industrial enterprise. Here may be found the reason why the burghers did so little to save the Abbey when the hour for its dissolution struck.

On the wider stage of national history a prominent part was played. In favour with successive occupants of the throne, enjoying the protection of the Holy See, selected for numerous assemblies of Parliament, for royal marriages and funerals, for great secular and ecclesiastical Councils, the Abbey, like other great religious houses, exerted no small influence on public affairs. Two at least of

its Abbots were men of literary culture and theological learning. One was afterwards consecrated Archbishop of Rouen, another Archbishop of Bordeaux; a third attained the abbacy of Cluny itself.

The stately Church, honoured by the grave of its royal founder, sanctified by the reputed relics of prophet, of apostle, of Christ Himself, was adorned by everything that could impress the worshipper at its shrines, and attracted pilgrims and benefactors from far and near. The Hospitium, famous for its "unwearied and delightful hospitality," had one of the best frequented Guest-halls in the country, and possessed an importance that is with difficulty realised under the changed conditions of modern life. The cloister Library, entrusted with the custody of state documents, consulted on political and ecclesiastical questions, was a nursery of theological, historical, linguistic and musical studies.[7]

The influence of the religious houses, however, had reached its meridian some years

before the end drew near. The political importance of the Abbots was on the wane; much of the monastic gold was mixed with dross.

Even at Reading the brethren were no longer as of yore "a noble pattern of holiness." The Hospitium, once far famed, had become converted into the Royal Grammar School of Henry VII., a conversion significant of the changes that were coming over the land. The Almshouse for poor sisters was disused. The Leper-house, a noble charity founded centuries ago by the good Abbot Aucherius, had closed its doors. True leprosy was extinct; yet many of the other diseases, such as lupus and cancer, formerly tended within its walls, were as prevalent as ever.

But in spite of all these changes, Reading Abbey in the early sixteenth century still enjoyed an immense prestige as an ancient, royal and religious Foundation, and counted for much in the councils of the nation.

The Fall of the Abbey.

VERY dramatic was the fall of the famous Abbey, which had played so important a rôle on the stage of national history. Its mitred Abbot, Peer of Parliament, the favourite of his King, was doomed to die a traitor's death, his Abbey to become a scene of desolation.

I.—The Coming Storm.

England of the sixteenth century was stirred by many forces that did not exist in the twelfth. The revival of learning, the

spread of the printing press, the development of municipal life, were opening a fresh chapter in the life of the people. The spiritual fervour of the religious houses had dwindled to a vanishing point, and had been replaced by superstition, indolence and self-indulgence. Many of the houses were reputed immoral and corrupt, opposed to the revival of letters, and exhibiting the faults of institutions that had outlived their day. The veneration once felt for them had given place to strong dislike, shared both by King and people.

Among proximate causes of the dissolution of the monasteries an important place must be given to the Act of Supremacy, passed in 1534, which made Henry VIII. "on earth Supreme Head of the Church of England," and transferred the right of visitation of the monasteries from the Papacy to the Crown. Following on this came the appointment of Thomas Cromwell as Vicar-General or Vicegerent of the King in all matters ecclesiastical.

During the momentous struggle with the Pope, when the religious houses showed themselves hostile to the King's designs, while their vast wealth aroused his cupidity, Cromwell proved a willing and crafty lieutenant for carrying out the policy of dissolution.

Doubtless at Reading Abbey there were abuses and corruptions, such as have stained the memory of many similar institutions. But even if the indictment be admitted, no excuse can be found for the illegal and scandalous treatment of Abbot Hugh Faringdon, for which the blame mainly falls on Thomas Cromwell and his royal master.

It was in 1536 that the Act of Parliament was passed dissolving the smaller monasteries, viz. religious houses which possessed an annual income of less than £200, the Act being based on the assurance of the King that evil lives were being led in such smaller monasteries. Of this, says the preamble to the Act, Henry "had knowledge . . . as well by the 'compertes' of his late visitation

as by sundry credible informations." As a further reason it was stated that the religious in the smaller monasteries would be useful to swell the ranks of "divers and great solemn monasteries of the realm (wherein, thanks be to God, religion is right well kept and observed)."

Stow states that 376 monasteries were suppressed as a result of this Act, the value of their lands being £32,000 a year, while the spoils of the houses yielded to the King's purse were estimated at £100,000. The political disturbances in the north, where the monks had been more popular than further south, somewhat checked the progress of the dissolutions. But when the insurgents had been crushed, the rising was used as an excuse for further suppressions.

Hitherto the attainder of an Abbot for treason had not been held to affect the property of the Abbey over which he ruled. But the King now decided to confiscate such property as part of the punishment imposed on

the Abbot for supposed or real treason, and on this plea several of the larger monasteries were dealt with, although, according to the Act of 1536, only those with a yearly income of under £200 could be suppressed.

In order to obtain the sanction of Parliament for these further measures, a Bill was introduced in April 1539, covering the illegal suppression of the greater monasteries, and granting to the King all "Abbathies, Priories, &c., which hereafter shall happen to be dissolved, suppressed, renounced, relinquished, forfeited, given up or come into the King's Highness." There is also a parenthesis referring to such others as "shall happen to come to the King's Highness by attainder or attainders of treason." These Henry and his heirs were to hold for ever, any house subsequently surrendered or dissolved being similarly treated. As soon as this Act was passed, further attacks on the monasteries were commenced. By threats or by promises, or failing these, by accusation of treason, the

Abbots of three of the largest Abbeys, viz. Glastonbury, Colchester and Reading, were similarly and almost simultaneously dealt with.

II.—The Martyrdom.

Hugh Cook Faringdon, the last Abbot of Reading (Fig. xvii.), was elected to the abbacy in 1520, and after the confirmation of his election was honoured by a visit from King Henry VIII., who received a goodly present of "great pykes, great carps, salmon, sturgeon and other fish." A strong friendship sprung up between the sovereign and "his own Abbot," as Faringdon was termed, presents being on various occasions exchanged between them.

Faringdon in return gave what support he could to the royal policy. In 1530 he joined other spiritual lords in petitioning Pope Clement VII. to grant the divorce of Henry and Queen Catherine. He further assisted the King's matrimonial designs by lending

him such books from the monastic library as might justify the proposed divorce. On the question of the royal supremacy Faringdon appears to have been a good Catholic. True it is that in 1536 he signed the Articles of Faith passed by Convocation which virtually acknowledged the King's supremacy of the Church of England. But he probably never intended to reject Papal authority in spiritual matters, drawing a distinction, as did others in those days, between the Church of England and the Catholic Church.

Politically also Faringdon loyally supported the King, for at the time of the great northern insurrection in 1536 the Abbot of Reading is found on the list of those contributing men to fight against the rebel forces.

But neither personal friendship nor political loyalty availed to save Faringdon and his Abbey from the storm which overwhelmed the monasteries.

Side by side with the Abbey were flourish-

Fig. xBii.—Hugh Cook Faringdon.

ing, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the House of the Grey Friars, and also the famous, although less ancient, "Chapel of the blessed Mary" and shrine at Caversham just across the Thames. This shrine possessed an Image of Our Lady, "plated over with silver," and also a relic, viz. "an angel with one wing, that brought to Caversham the spear's head that pierced our Saviour's side upon the Cross." These highly prized possessions had made Caversham a place of "great pilgrimage." But within a few months of each other the Abbey, the Friary and the Caversham Chapel and shrine were all suppressed.

It was in August 1538 that arrived in Reading Dr. John London, one of the royal commissioners for the visitation of monasteries, who soon became notorious for the wholesale desecration he carried out. On August 31 he wrote to Thomas Cromwell that Peter Schefford, warden of the Grey Friars, desired licence for his friars "to change their

garments," *i.e.* to abandon their monastic habit. The warden's request appears to have been immediately granted, since by September 13th the Friary was surrendered. The friars had discovered, he says, that the way to perfection did not consist in the wearing of any special habit; moreover, they were accused of being hypocrites, and no longer received from the people the support they formerly enjoyed. By the 14th the Church, the windows of which were "full of friars," images, altars and dorter, had been defaced, and the friars turned out of doors in secular apparel.

The famous shrine at Caversham was also treated with scant ceremony. By September 17th, 1538, the famous silver Image of Our Lady had been pulled down and nailed up in a chest, ready to be sent by barge to Cromwell's house in London, the three coats, cap and hair of the Image being also despatched. The renowned angel, "the principal relic of idolatry in England," was similarly treated, "the lights, shrowds, crutches, images of

wax, &c. about the Chapel" being all defaced. A canon of Notley Abbey, who officiated as warden of Caversham, sang in the Chapel and received the offerings, was sent back to his Abbey. The only relic that escaped was a reputed "piece of the holy halter Judas was hanged with," which may have been hidden from the spoiler.[8]

These events must have caused profound anxiety to Hugh Faringdon, and not without cause, for Dr. London seized the opportunity of his being at Reading to inquire what the Abbot's views might be. On September 14th, 1538,[9] he wrote to Cromwell that the Abbot "said, as they all do, he was at the King's command, but loth be they to come to any free surrender." Three days later London promises to send to Cromwell by his servant "a token in parchment under the convent seal from the Abbot and convent." Unhappily it is not known what this said "token" was. By September 18th he had required the Abbot to show him the

relics, which was willingly done, and after making an inventory, had locked them up behind the High Altar. The Abbot's reply and his readiness to exhibit the relics (if London's account can be trusted) seem to show that at this time he was not altogether unwilling to consider the question of a surrender, and this feeling possibly London wished to strengthen by the favourable report he made to Cromwell on the state of the Abbey. "They have," he writes, "a good lecture in Scripture daily read in the Chapter House, both in English and Latin."

Doubtless Faringdon had many searchings of heart as to his duty during the next few months. But when once his conscience told him to remain loyal to the Pope as supreme Head of the Church, all hesitation seems to have vanished. Between May 19th, 1539, when the Act dealing with the monasteries was passed, and the following September, Faringdon appears to have been again sounded as to whether he would voluntarily surrender

his Abbey into the King's hands. Neither threats of violence nor promises of generous treatment, however, induced compliance. A fresh charge was therefore invented, viz. loyalty to the Holy See, such loyalty implying a denial of the King's spiritual supremacy, and being treated as equivalent to treason. Faringdon was too convinced a Catholic to deny his faith in the Pope. Accordingly he was arrested about September 17th and imprisoned in the Tower. There he probably formed one of a group of prisoners, including the Abbots of Glastonbury and Colchester, who communicated with each other by means of a blind harper named William Moore, and encouraged each other to resist the King.

As a Peer of the realm, Faringdon should have been arraigned before Parliament on a charge of treason. But no trial under attainder took place, and he was condemned to the death of a traitor as a result of secret inquisitions in the Tower. Indeed, there is evidence that Cromwell, regardless of justice,

sent Faringdon to a trial of which the verdict was already determined. In the "Remembrances," written with Cromwell's own hand, we read, "The Abbot Redyng (*sic*) to be sent down to be tried and executed at Redyng with his complices." Evidently the trial, in the words of Gasquet, was nothing more than "a ghastly mockery of justice," and leaves an indelible stain on the name of Cromwell.

After being imprisoned for about two months, Faringdon was brought down to Reading, and underwent in his own hall of justice what was nothing more than a mock trial. Then followed the final scene on the 15th of November 1539, before the Gateway of his own stately Abbey. The burgesses of Reading, so long oppressed by the *domnus abbas*, flock round the scaffold which is to liberate them from the yoke. Two fellow-monks, John Eynon and John Rugg, probably tried on a similar charge, are condemned to a similar fate. Faringdon boldly tells the crowd the cause for which "he and his com-

panions were to die . . . fidelity to the See of Rome, which he declared was but the common faith of those who had the best right to know what was the true teaching of the English Church."

With a rope round his neck the great Lord Abbot stands at the foot of the gibbet face to face with eternity. But he does not quail in the presence of death, and he dies the ghastly death of a traitor "pro Christo et ecclesia," martyred for defending the Church against the Crown.

Thus ends a famous monastic drama: Abbot, prior, almoner, sacrist, monk—*exeunt.*

III.—The Ruins.

The execution of Hugh Faringdon was followed by the immediate dissolution of the Abbey. Ere long commenced the dismantling of the fabric. The treasury was plundered; the plate, vestments and tapestries were forwarded to London by Cromwell's direction for the King's use. The lead from

the Church roof was melted into pigs and fodders. The pillars, the tiles and the woodwork were scattered far and wide. Some of the conventual buildings were converted by Henry VIII. into a palace, and used until 1625 on the occasion of royal visits. After this the demolition proceeded rapidly. During the siege of Reading in the Civil War the walls of the Abbey were battered by artillery and blown up by gunpowder. Indeed the citizens of Reading actually requested "the stones of the Abbey for their streets!"

The story of the fate of Reading Abbey since the dissolution may fitly be concluded by a mention of those portions which survive to this day.

Of the original "mur d'enceinte" the eastern end of the Plummery Wall forms the only remaining section. All four entrance Gateways have disappeared, but happily the Inner Gateway still exists in a restored condition.

Of the Abbey Church excoriated fragments of the north and south transepts remain *in situ*, the latter one retaining the greater part of its altitude. But every part has been stripped of its finished mason work, and robbed of its comeliness.

The bases of two pillars of the central Tower and one or two of those of the Choir have been unearthed, but they do little more than assist in the identification of the ruins. Of the monastic buildings there survive the walls of the Chapter House, and portions of the Cloisters, Refectory, Dormitory, Necessarium and Hospitium. There are also traces of the original Mill and Stables; but not a single parapet, not a finished aperture remains; almost all the squared stone has been removed, leaving exposed the compact uncased flint rubble which formed the core, and which still gives the impression of great solidity.

Where once rose aisle and tower, fluted column and traceried window, are now deso-

late ruins. Vanished are the altars of God and the images of His saints. No longer do chant and anthem with sweet music rise to Heaven in intercession for the sins of mankind; only cold silent stones survive to remind us that on this earth even noble and royal Foundations have their day and cease to be.

Who can stand among those ruins unmoved? The ground itself is holy. Has it not been consecrated for centuries to the worship of God, to the relief of the poor, to the tending of the leper!

Alas that our forefathers cared so little for their Abbey as to allow its ruthless destruction! To them might be addressed the very words of Napoleon to the citizens of Cluny: "Vous avez laissé vendre et détruire votre grande et belle église; allez, vous êtes des vandales, je ne visiterai pas Cluny."

Let us hope that the remaining fragments may be guarded with jealous affection, and long remain to tell the story of "that noble

and royal monastery of Reading," with "its monks of unwearied and delightful hospitality."

GREAT SEAL OF HENRY I.

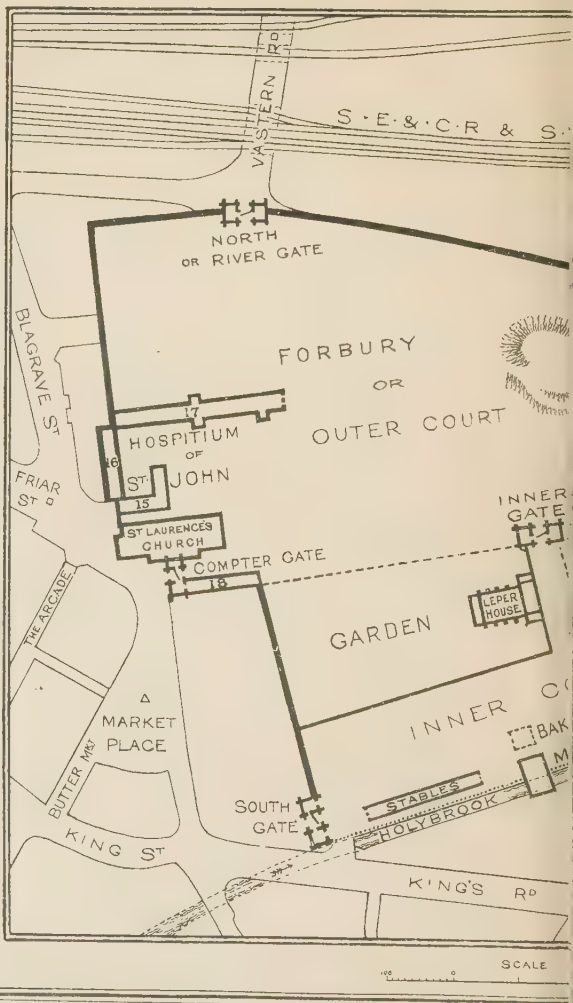
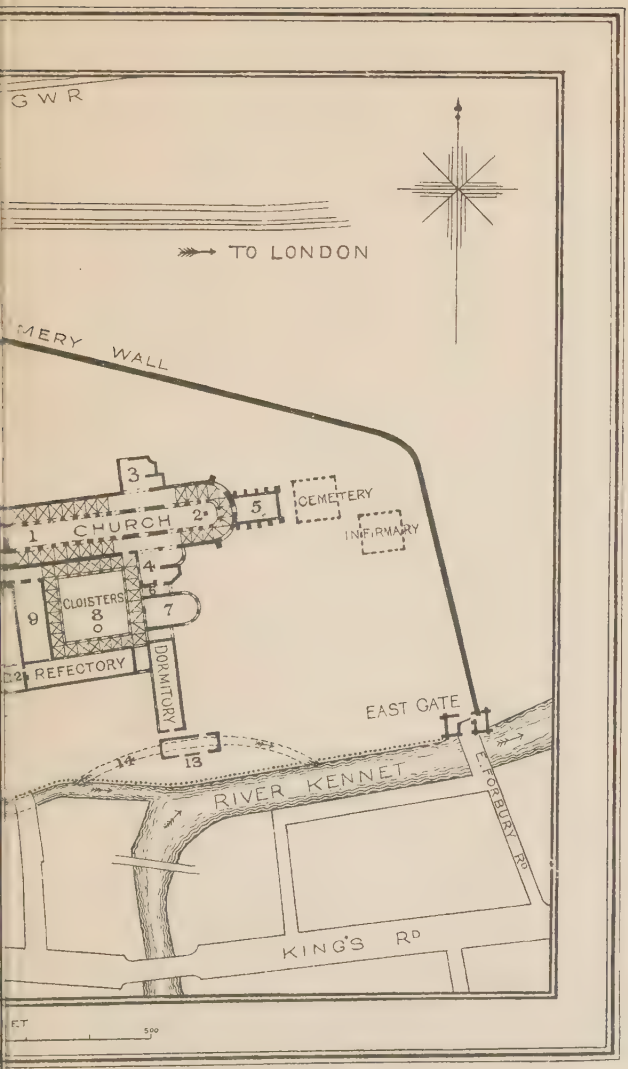


FIG. XVIII. Plan


G W R
TO LONDON
MERY WALL
CHURCH
CEMETERY
INFIRMARY
CLOISTERS
REFECTORY
DORMITORY
EAST GATE
RIVER KENNET
FORBURY RD
KING'S RD
500

the Abbey.

Plan of the Abbey.

REFERENCES.

1. Nave of Church.
2. Choir.
3. North Transept.
4. South Transept.
5. Lady Chapel.
6. Sacristy and Treasury.
7. Chapter House.
8. Well in Cloister Garth.
9. ? Cellarer's Lodging.
10. ? Abbot's Lodging.
11. Abbot's Garden.
12. Kitchen and Buttery.
13. Necessarium or Rere Dorter.
14. Main Drain.
15. Residence House of Hospitium.
16. Guest-hall of Hospitium.
17. Dormitory of Hospitium.
18. Porter's Lodge.

The accompanying Plan of the Abbey is based on standard authorities, but is conjectural in certain of its details.

Appendix i.

The Abbots of Reading.

	A.D.
1. Hugh I. or de Boves, . . .	1123
2. Aucherius or Ausgerus, . . .	1130
3. Edward, ...	1135
4. Reginald, ...	1154
5. Roger, ...	1158
6. William I. or William le Templier, .	1164
7. Joseph, ...	1173
8. Hugh II.	*ca.* 1180
9. Helias, ...	1200
10. Simon, ...	1213
11. Adam de Latebar or de Lathbury, .	1226
12. Richard I. or de Cicestria, . .	1238
13. Adam I.	*ca.* 1239
14. Adam II.	1249

The Abbots of Reading.

		A.D.
15.	William II.	1249
16.	Richard II.	—
17.	Richard de Banaster or de Rading,	1261
18.	Robert de Burghate or de Burgate,	1268
19.	William de Sutton,	1287
20.	Nicholas de Quappelade or de Quappelode,	1305
21.	John Stoke de Appleford or de Appleton,	1328
22.	Henry de Appleford,	1341
23.	William de Dombleton,	1360
24.	John de Sutton,	1368
25.	Richard de Yateley,	1378
26.	Thomas Erle or de Erley,	1409
27.	Thomas Henley,	1430
28.	John Thorne I.	1446
29.	John Thorne II.	1486
30.	Thomas Worcester,	1519
31.	Hugh Cook Faringdon,	1520

Appendix ii.

A Calendar of Reading Abbey.[10]

Jan. 1, 1532.—Abbot Hugh Faringdon received from King Henry VIII. a New Year gift of £20 in a white leather purse.

Jan. 4, 1136.—Interment of the founder, King Henry I., before the High Altar of the Abbey Church, in the presence of King Stephen and many nobles.

Jan. 9, 1403.—Arrival at the Abbey of King Henry IV., who remained for several days, and received a large consignment of rich cloth of gold as a present for his bride Johanna.

Jan. 14, 1440.—Parliament convened at the Abbey, William Tresham being speaker.

Feb. 3, 1254.—"Final and endly Concord" drawn up between the Abbot and the burgesses, by which the burgesses secured the control of their Guild Hall and Guild Merchant, as of old; every burgess to pay five pennies yearly as chepyn-gavell or market tax to the Abbot.

Feb. 11, 1454.—Parliament convened at the Abbey, but immediately prorogued to Westminster.

Feb. 16, 1207.—Letter from Pope Innocent III. granting protection and confirmation of possessions and privileges to Helias, the Abbot, and the Cluniac Convent of Reading.

Feb. 25, 1173.—William le Templier, sixth Abbot, consecrated Archbishop of Bordeaux in the presence of King Henry II.

March 2, 1253.—Indulgence granted by Boniface, Archbishop of Canterbury, for forty days to all who visited the altar of St.

Thomas the Martyr in the Abbey, on the feast of his passion and translation.

March 6, 1453.—Parliament convened in the Refectory of the Abbey.

March 17, 1185.—Eraclius, Patriarch of the Holy Resurrection, conferred with Henry II., and besought him to rescue the Holy Land from Saladin.

March 23, 1207.—Second letter from Pope Innocent III. to the Abbot and monks of Reading.

March 29, 1125.—Probable date of the granting to the Abbey of its Foundation Charter by Henry I.

April 5, 1216.—King John paid a visit to the Abbey.

April 8, 1163. — Wager of battle between Robert de Montfort and Henry de Essex. The defeated Essex joined the community of Reading Abbey.

April 15, 1123.—Hugh, Prior of St. Pancras, at Lewes, appointed first Abbot of Reading.

April 19, 1164.—"Hallowing" of the Abbey Church by Archbishop Thomas Becket, in the presence of Henry II., ten suffragan bishops and many nobles.

April 19, 1314. — Foundation of the Lady Chapel, dedicated to the Virgin Mary (on the 150th anniversary of the "Hallowing" of the Abbey Church).

May 3, 1389.—King Richard II. held a Council at the Abbey, at which he dismissed his advisers, and declared himself ready to assume the reigns of government.

May 5, 1141.—Visit paid to the Abbey by the Empress Matilda, daughter of Henry I.

May 5, 1468.—Parliament convened at the Abbey, but shortly afterwards adjourned to Westminster.

May 13, 1895.—Beatification by Pope Leo XIII. of Hugh Faringdon, William Eynon and John Rugg, who suffered death "for the Catholic faith and for the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff."

May 19, 1359.—Marriage of John of Gaunt

to Blanche, daughter of the Duke of Lancaster, in the Abbey Church. The bridal ceremonial was celebrated by a splendid pageant, and by a tournament in which the King, his four sons and nineteen knights took part.

May 28, 1266.—Letters of protection granted to the Abbey by Henry III. for one year.

June 1, 1175.—King Henry II. held a royal festival at Reading.

June 4, 1338.—Letter from King Edward III. to Abbot John Stoke de Appleford, acknowledging a loan of plate.

June 18, 1121.—Founding of the Abbey by King Henry I.

June 24, 1295.—Earliest extant writ summoning the Abbot of Reading to Parliament.

June 25, 1292.—Indulgence granted by John, Archbishop of Dublin, for forty days to all who visited and bestowed donations upon the Abbey.

July 14, 1233.—Grant of land in Caversham Road to the Franciscans for their Friary.

July 25.—Festival of St. James, when forty days' indulgence was granted to pilgrims to his shrine.

July 25.—Fair held annually in the Forbury on St. James' Festival and on the three following days.

July 29, 1279.—John Peckham, Archbishop of Canterbury, held a Council at the Abbey, probably in the Chapter House.

Aug. 1.—Festival of St. Peter ad Vincula. Every burgess paid five pence yearly as chepyn-gavell to the Abbot.

Aug. 2, 1554.—Visit of Queen Mary and Philip of Spain to the royal palace, into which the dissolved Abbey was converted.

Aug. 5, 1184.—King Henry II. held a Council at the Abbey, in order to elect an Archbishop of Canterbury.

Aug. 10.—Fair held annually in the Forbury on the Festival of St. Laurence and the three following days.

Sept. 6, 1288.—Papal licence granted to the Abbot to wear the mitre, ring, gloves,

dalmatic, tunicle and sandals of a mitred Abbot.

Sept. 7, 1216.—King John paid a visit to the Abbey.

Sept. 8, 1539.—Report made by Thomas Moyle to Thomas Cromwell as to the gold and silver plate and other treasures belonging to the Abbey.

Sept. 12, 1189.—Writ issued by King Richard I. to the Abbey that they hold their lands &c. free, as by the Charter of Henry I.

Sept. 12, 1539.—Abbey surrendered to Sir William Penizon on behalf of the King.

Sept. 13, 1538.—The Friary surrendered by Peter Schefford, warden of the Grey Friars.

Sept. 13, 1552.—King Edward VI. paid a visit to the recently dissolved Abbey.

Sept. 14, 1130.—Hugh de Boves, first Abbot of Reading, consecrated Archbishop of Rouen.

Sept. 17, 1539.—Abbot Hugh Faringdon a prisoner in the Tower.

Sept. 20, 1538.—Appointment by Abbot Hugh Faringdon of Thomas Myrth to be Mayor of Reading from among three persons selected by the burgesses.

Sept. 21.—Fair held annually in the Forbury on St. Matthew's Day.

Oct. 9, 1539.—Admission to office of the newly elected mayor, Richard Justice, by Thomas Vachell, deputy High Steward, acting in place of the deprived Abbot.

Oct. 10.—Anniversary of the reception of the relics into the Church (*exceptio reliquiarum*).[11]

Oct. 19, 1206.—John of Florence, legate from Pope Innocent III., held a Council at the Abbey.

Nov. 4, 1537.—Abbot Hugh Faringdon said mass and conducted the service during the lying-in-state of Queen Jane Seymour.

Nov. 6, 1467.—Parliament convened "in a certain apartment within the Abbey prepared for the purpose," where the King

was "seated on a royal throne, and the three estates in full Parliament assembled."

Nov. 8, 1338.—Confirmation by King Edward III. of the privilege of having "one moneyer and one die for the making as well half-pennies and farthings as sterlings."

Nov. 11, 1164.—Death of Hugh de Boves or d'Amiens, Archbishop of Rouen, and formerly first Abbot of Reading.

Nov. 12, 1453.—Parliament convened at the Abbey, but only to be prorogued, owing to plague in Reading.

Nov. 12, 1537.—Funeral of Queen Jane Seymour in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, Abbot Hugh Faringdon officiating *inter alios.*

Nov. 13, 1295.—Borough of Reading represented in Parliament for the first time, by Galfridus de Engleys and Elias de Baunbury.

Nov. 15, 1539.—Execution of Hugh Cook

Faringdon, thirty-first Abbot, on a charge of high treason.

Nov. 17, 1338.—Writ issued to John de Flete, warden of the King's mint, to make three dies . . . one for sterlings, another for half-pennies, and the third for farthings, for the making of money . . . in Reading.

Nov. 23, 1452.—Henry VI. was at the Abbey and raised his half-brother Edmund to the earldom of Richmond.

Dec. 1, 1135.—Death of the founder, King Henry I., at Bois-Lion, near Rouen.

Dec. 1, 1136.—Visit of Queen Adeliza to the grave of her late consort, the founder of the Abbey, in order to place a rich pall on the High Altar.

Dec. 4, 1539.—Survey and audit of the property of the dissolved monastery begun by Richard Pollard, Thomas Moyle and others.

Dec. 6, 1213.—Important ecclesiastical Council held by King John at the Abbey, probably in its Chapter House.

Dec. 25, 1227.—King Henry III. spent Christmas at the Abbey, great festivities taking place in his honour.

Dec. 25, 1346.—King Edward III. spent Christmas at the Abbey, a great "Justing" being held in his honour.

Dec. 26, 1276.—Writ issued by Edward I. sequestrating part of the revenues of the Abbey for the payment of its debts.

Appendix iii.

How "Reading" used to be spelt.[12]

Rad'.	Radingg'.	Radyngge.
Raƌ.	Radingia.	Radyngia.
Radding.	Radingie.	Radyngie.
Radding'.	Radingis.	Radyngt.
Radengis.	Radings.	Rædig.
Radin'.	Radingt.	Rædiga.
Rading.	Radingy.	Rædinga.
Rading'.	Radyng.	Raid.
Radinḡ.	Radyng'.	Raidyngg.
Radinga.	Radynge.	Readine.
Radinge.	Radyngg.	Readingan.
Radingg.	Radyngg'.	Readinge.

How "Reading" used to be spelt.

Readingum.
Readyge.
Readyng.
Redden.
Redding.
Reddinge.
Reddyng.
Reddynge.
Redin.
Reding.
Reding'.
Redinga.
Redinge.
Redingg'.
Redingges.
Redingia.
Redingie.
Redings.
Redying.
Redyng.
Redyng'.
Redynge.
Redyngg.
Redyngg̃.
Redyngg'.
Redyngges.
Redyngia.
Redyngo.
Redyngs.
Reedinge.
Rheadyge.
Rheding.
Ridding.
Riding.
Rœdinga.

Adjectives.

Radigensis.
Radingensis.
Readigensis.
Readingensis.
Redingensis.
Redyngensis.
Rheadingenensis.

Notes.

1. The dormitory of the Hospitium, the western end of which was demolished in 1882, at the time of the erection of the New Town Hall, was restored in 1891, under the supervision of Mr. S. S. Stallwood, F.S.A. All the windows on the lower floor, on either side of the tower, are modern.

2. This seal of Hugh or Hugues de Boves, or Huon III. d'Amiens, Archbishop of Rouen, and formerly Abbot Hugh I. of Reading, is described in the "Collection de Sceaux" by M. Douët D'Arcq, part i. vol. ii., No. 6362. The same volume describes the fragment of another seal, No. 6361, of the same Archbishop, bearing a lion tearing its prey; also a counter-seal which appears

to bear the figure of a bull. A memoir of the Archbishop by Hébert will be found in *Revue des Questions Historiques*, vol. lxiv., p. 325.

3. At the muster-roll of 1311 in Reading there appeared eight men armed with sword, bow, arrows and knife; thirty-three with bows, arrows and knives, and over 235 with hatchets and knives. In 1371 the town was able to raise a body of archers for service abroad, and under Edward VI. it sent fifty soldiers armed with bills, swords, daggers, bows and arrows, and paid each soldier forty pence "for the King's affairs into Boulogne." Amongst the Abbots requisitioned for men against the northern rebels in 1536 the Abbot of Reading is called upon for sixty men.

Green, "Town Life in the Fifteenth Century," vol. i., p. 16; "Letters and Papers, F. & D., Henry VIII." vol. xi., No. 580.

4. W. J. Andrew, *Numismatic Chronicle*,

1901, p. 371; L. A. Lawrence, *Numismatic Chronicle*, 1893, vol. xiii., p. 46; *British Numismatic Journal*, vol. i., p. 373.

The silver penny shown in **Fig. xiii.** is from the collection of Mr. P. W. P. Carlyon-Britton.

5. Rindelgros and May were granted to the Abbey by King David I., brother-in-law of Henry Beauclerc.

6. There is evidence that Lutheran views took root in the Abbey early in the sixteenth century. In 1529 the Prior was imprisoned for "Luther's opinion," having apparently been won over by a priest called Thomas Garret or Garrard, who had renounced Roman Catholicism.

Gairdner, "History of the English Church in the Sixteenth Century," p. 92; "Letters and Papers, F. & D., Henry VIII." vol. i., p. 346; vol. iv., No. 5925.

7. The famous rondel "Sumer is icumen

in," which has been described as the "most remarkable ancient musical composition in existence," was first written down at Reading Abbey about the year 1225. Its composer has been generally supposed to be a North-countryman. But a consideration of the words, which "Professor J. Wright pronounces to be thirteenth century Wessex, Berkshire or Wiltshire," supports the view that the Rota may have been actually composed in Reading.—*Cf.* "The Oxford History of Music," vol. i., p. 332.

8. For fuller details of the Grey Friars at Reading and the Shrine at Caversham, *cf.* "Letters and Papers, F. & D., Henry VIII." vols. xiii. (ii.), xiv. (ii.)

9. In "Reading Abbey," p. 46, this date is erroneously given as 1535, following Gasquet, "Henry VIII. and the Dissolution of the Monasteries," vol. ii., p. 359.

10. This Calendar is based on Monastic

Chronicles and State Records, but, owing to the Reformation of the Calendar by Pope Gregory, the dates do not always correspond with present ones.

11. As to this meaning of "exceptio," *cf.* Grotefend's "Zeitrechnung des Deutschen Mittelalters."

12. "Reading" is derived from the Anglo-Saxon Reádingas (Reád, *i.e.* Red, a man's name, and *ing* a common AS. patronymic), and means properly the descendants of Reád. *Cf.* Smith, "Cyclopædia of Names;" Round, "The Commune of London," ch. i.

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